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Propaganda and Manipulation in History.
An Interdisciplinary Approach



Propaganda in Favour of Humanitarian Interventions as War Propaganda: The Case of the Yugoslav Wars

Beatrice Crețu*

Abstract: *Although the UN Charter (mostly) prohibits the use of force or the threat of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of a state, recent theoretical developments in the field of international relations, such as the emergence of the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P), draw attention to the atrocities committed against populations by their own states and represent a gateway to the justification of international interventions on humanitarian grounds. The legitimacy of such cases is hotly disputed, these operations oftentimes being compared to wars of aggression. This article aims to highlight how the propaganda in favour of the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia exhibits certain features similar to those of war propaganda and whether sharing the same toolkit constitutes sufficient grounds for qualifying as war propaganda.*

Keywords: propaganda, humanitarian intervention, NATO, Yugoslavia, Kosovo

Introduction

The Charter of the United Nations forbids the use of force or the threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of a state,¹

* Beatrice Crețu is a PhD student at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, with the thesis “Peacekeeping Missions under the UN, NATO and the EU in Africa and Europe (1995 – 2015)”. Her research interests include peace and conflict studies, human rights and international cooperation. Contact: beatricenicolle.cretu@drd.unibuc.ro.

¹ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, San Francisco, 24 October 1945, Chapter I, art. 2, paragraph 4.

excluding exceptional circumstances, such as upholding the right to individual or collective self-defence.² At the same time, war propaganda has been condemned in international law by a series of UN General Assembly resolutions (110 / 1947,³ 381 / 1950,⁴ 819 / 1955⁵), which denounce any form of propaganda meant to provoke or incite any threat to peace or any act of aggression. Resolution 381 / 1950 defines “propaganda against peace” in the following manner: “(1) incitement to conflicts or acts of aggression; (2) measures tending to isolate the peoples from any contact with the outside world, by preventing the press, radio and other media of communication from reporting international events, and thus hindering mutual comprehension and understanding between peoples; (3) measures tending to silence or distort the activities of the United Nations in favour of peace or to prevent their peoples from knowing the views of other State Members”.⁶

Even so, evolutions in recent years have indicated a certain acceptance of interventions justified on humanitarian grounds. For instance, the concept of *responsibility to protect* highlights the duty states bear to shield their population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, as well as their responsibility to prevent incitement in favour of these acts;⁷ the refusal or inability to fulfil these responsibilities

² *Ibidem*, Chapter VII, art. 51.

³ United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 110 (II) Measures to be taken against propaganda and the inciters of a new war*, A/RES/2/110, 3 November 1947.

⁴ *Idem*, *Resolution 381 (V) Condemnation of propaganda against peace*, A/RES/381, 17 November 1950.

⁵ *Idem*, *Resolution 819 (IX) Strengthening of peace through the removal of barriers to free exchange of information and ideas*, A/RES/819(IX), 11 December 1954.

⁶ *Idem*, *Resolution 381 (V) Condemnation of propaganda against peace*, A/RES/381, 17 November 1950, paragraph 2.

⁷ *Idem*, *2005 World Summit Outcome*, A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005, art. 138.

assigns them to the purview of the international community, which takes it upon itself to act collectively, in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression), including via the use of force.⁸

These interventions can take several forms; there are clauses included in the UN Charter for measures involving the use of force (demonstrations, blockades, other operations by air, sea and land, which can include invasions),⁹ but they can also be organized as peacekeeping missions. However, such interventions entail the violation of the principles of sovereignty,¹⁰ territorial integrity and non-interference in the affairs of other states.¹¹ These principles are enshrined in the UN Charter, generating a well-debated contradiction in terms.

War propaganda exhibits certain specific features, such as the dehumanization of opponents, galvanizing and radicalizing the population, disinformation, reducing the number of victims on the enemy side and maximizing or inventing victims on one's own side, weaponizing historical myth etc. Propaganda in favour of intervention is aimed, first of all, at legitimizing war on humanitarian grounds and painting the conflict zone as a threat against international peace and security (by causing an influx of refugees, destabilizing economic relations, arms trafficking, the domino effect etc). What these two forms of propaganda share is that both attempt to

⁸ Idem, *2005 World Summit Outcome*, A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005, art. 139.

⁹ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, San Francisco, 24 October 1945, Chapter VII, art. 42.

¹⁰ Idem, *Charter of the United Nations*, San Francisco, 24 October 1945, Chapter I, art. 2, paragraph 1.

¹¹ Idem, *Charter of the United Nations*, San Francisco, 24 October 1945, Chapter I, art. 2, paragraph 7.

justify instigating or getting involved into a conflict, as well as objectionable acts committed along the way, such as bombardments, destruction, mass killings, genocide or rape used as a weapon of war.

This article aims to draw attention to the characteristics pro-intervention propaganda during the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO has in common with the propaganda employed during the Yugoslav wars. The study was chosen as it offers ample opportunity for examining these two phenomena. The former president of Serbia and of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević, was even accused at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia of using the media to spread false and exaggerated information about attacks made by Bosnian Muslims and Catholic Croats against the Serbian people. At the same time, NATO's 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia remains a controversial episode, since it was an operation deployed without UN authorization and caused abundant destruction and numerous civilian victims.

To this end, we plan to identify several similarities between the propaganda used to justify NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia in 1999 and Serbian war propaganda. For our analysis, we shall employ the following definition of propaganda: the process of manipulating the target audience by disseminating information, constructing a line of argumentation or carrying out certain actions in accordance with a well-defined ideological foundation, in the service of previously established objectives.

Short history of the conflict in Kosovo

The Kosovo region is endowed with a special symbolic status and is mythologized as the historical homeland of the Serbian people: the Serbian prince Lazar was defeated near Pristina by the Ottoman Empire on 28th June 1389, marking the beginning of a long period of Ottoman domination (428 years). However, over the years, Kosovo's population changed drastically in terms of ethnic composition: in 1991, the 1,956,196 inhabitants were comprised of 82% Albanians, 11% Serbs and Montenegrins, 3% Muslim Serbs (the so-called "gorani"), 2% Roma and 2% other minorities. The majority of Kosovo Albanians are Muslim, speak Albanian and use the Latin alphabet.¹²

During the communist regime, Kosovo gained de-factor republican status (it had secured a significant degree of autonomy granted by the Yugoslav constitution of 1974); in March 1989, however, Slobodan Milošević officially incorporated the region within Serbia. The campaign for regaining autonomy started as early as June 1991 with the election of Dr. Ibrahim Rugova as president of the unofficial Kosovo "republic", yet his pacifist policies proved to be ineffectual, even after the Dayton Agreement was signed in November 1995, which is why the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) started resorting to guerrilla tactics in 1996.¹³

The actual war took place between 5th March 1998 and 11th June 1999 and was characterized by the KLA's guerrilla attacks, followed by Serbian

¹² N. Thomas, K. Mikulan, *The Yugoslav Wars (2): Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia 1992 - 2000*, Botley, Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 2006, pp. 31 - 32.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

retaliation, comprised mostly of ethnic cleansing. If the KLA strategy was to provoke brutal reprisals on the Serbian side and to escalate the conflict to such a degree that the international community would feel obligated to intervene, creating the necessary conditions which could allow Kosovo to gain independence, Operation *Potkovica* was aimed at disguising ethnic cleansing as military tactics directed towards guerrilla forces, achieved by systematically killing Kosovo Albanians or displacing them in Albania or other regions, after which the Serbian authorities could repopulate the area with Serbian refugees from Croatia and Bosnia. However, the KLA was also guilty of ethnic cleansing attempts, as removing Serbs and other minorities from Kosovo figured among their objectives.¹⁴

The Racak episode from January 1999, which left 45 Kosovo-Albanian civilians dead, galvanized the international community and compelled NATO to act by bringing the belligerents to the negotiating table. In the end, the Rambouillet negotiations amounted to failure, though; the document was signed only by the Kosovo delegation, while the Serbian offensive continued to be predicated on ethnic cleansing. Operation Allied Force was initiated on 24th March 1999 and consisted mainly of aerial bombing. The number of aircraft employed as part of the operation increased from 344 (in March) to 1,031 (in June), while military raids increased from 30 – 50 / day in the first week to 300 / day at the end of May.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 47 - 50.

¹⁵ Mark Webber, "The Kosovo War: A Recapitulation", in: *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)*, Vol. 85, No. 3, The War over Kosovo: Ten Years On, May 2009, pp. 449 - 450.

The impact on Serbian forces was limited; destructions were mostly concentrated on civilian infrastructure: Serbia's electricity production was compromised, as well as its oil refineries, its arms industry and its communication capabilities. In addition, 59 bridges, 9 major road connections and 7 airports in Serbia were destroyed; 500 civilians were killed and other 800 were hurt, as reported by Human Rights Watch. Serbian military casualties ranged between 576 (according to Serbian authorities) and 5000 (figure provided by NATO).¹⁶

During the bombardment, at least 4,400 Kosovo-Albanian civilians were killed as a result of the surging number of attacks by Serbian forces on the Kosovo population. Furthermore, 863,000 civilians fled Kosovo during March – June 1999 and other 590,000 were displaced, amounting to 90% of the population leaving their homes, the greatest influx of refugees in Europe since the Second World War.¹⁷ At the end of the war, Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council from 10th June 1999 placed the province of Kosovo under the administration of UNMIK (UN Interim Administration in Kosovo) and authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping mission under NATO, namely KFOR (Kosovo Administration Force).¹⁸

Pro-intervention propaganda

NATO propaganda constantly positioned itself in antithesis with Yugoslav propaganda, by painting Serbian mass-media as deceitful and

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 451.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 451.

¹⁸ United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1244*, S/RES/1244 (1999), 10 June 1999.

exaggerated. “Propaganda” is a term which carries negative connotations, which is why NATO leaders tried to distance themselves from this label, although their efforts can easily be described as such, and, instead, tried to characterize the discourse of the Yugoslav state as “propaganda”. On 10th May 1999, Tony Blair even declared: “We take freedom of speech and freedom of the press for granted... The Serb media is state-controlled. It is part and parcel of Milošević’s military machine.”¹⁹

One of the features of pro-intervention propaganda was, as in the case of Serbian war propaganda, the **distortion of facts**, which can be observed when it comes to the discourse around the Rambouillet negotiations. While they were publicly presented as genuine attempts towards conflict resolution which suffered as a result of Serbian inflexibility, several officials later declared that the clauses of the agreement were intentionally worded so as to prove unacceptable for the Yugoslav delegation. At the same time the British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook was encouraging Albanian representatives to sign, in order to initiate the bombings, a few hours before the deadline, Serbian representatives were handed a draft agreement with an additional 56 pages, in which they were asked to accept unrestricted access for NATO troops on the entire territory of Yugoslavia, forcing them to refuse.²⁰ A State Department official even declared: “We intentionally set the bar too high for the Serbs to comply. They need some bombing and that’s what they are going to get.” The declarations were noted by journalists, but they were never reported, which would contradict Tony Blair’s assertion on the freedom of

¹⁹ Philip Hammond, “Reporting ‘Humanitarian; Warfare: propaganda, moralism and NATO’s Kosovo war”, in: *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2000, p. 367.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 377.

Western press.²¹ The Australian historian Christopher Clark described the Rambouillet Agreement as even more drastic than the ultimatum Serbia received in 1914 from Austria-Hungary.²²

Garnering public sympathy for NATO's cause was also achieved by **overemphasizing certain incidents and endowing them with symbolic value**. A relevant example recalls the events of Racak of 15th January 1999, which NATO leaders presented as the massacre of 40 Albanian civilians, an angle later embraced by the Western media outlets as well. Racak became a pretext for handing Yugoslavia the ultimatum of either signing a peace agreement with the KLA, mediated by Western powers, or of being subjected to bombings,²³ even though the French newspapers *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* had reported that the victims were a result of a skirmish between Serb forces and the KLA.²⁴

Moreover, pro-intervention propaganda efforts took the classic form of **demonizing the enemy**, aimed both at slandering emblematic individuals (e.g. Milošević) and at dehumanizing the entire Serbian people. Thus, with NATO's blessing, the Western media engaged in a campaign of denigration towards Slobodan Milošević, characterizing him as a "warlord", "Serb butcher", the "Butcher of Belgrade", the "Butcher of the Balkans", "the most evil dictator to emerge in Europe since Adolf Hitler", a "psychopathic tyrant", "evil", "a man of no mercy", a "former Communist hardliner" and

²¹ Seth Ackerman, "What Reporters Knew About Kosovo Talks - But Didn't Tell", in: *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting Media*, 2 June 1999.

²² Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London, Allen Lane, 2012, p. 456.

²³ Philip Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

²⁴ ***, "Update on Racak", in: *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, 18th July 2001, available at <http://fair.org/press-release/update-on-racak/>, accessed on 19th September 2017.

comparing him to Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein and Pol Pot.²⁵ The Serbian people were subjected to the same process and described as “barbarians” with questionably mental sanity and lack of humanity.²⁶ The act of dehumanizing the enemy is meant to portray the Other as a primitive and irrational opponent, capable of inhuman acts, essentially an agent of Evil: confronting such an enemy thus becomes a moral duty. In his book “The New Ideology of Imperialism”, Füredi noted that post-1980s interventions are no longer justified to the public by military reasoning, but by appealing to the collective sense of morality, bringing the humanitarian dimension to the fore, even though these interventions remain a form of masked imperialism.²⁷

Pro-intervention propaganda is also exhibited by the means of **exaggerating or minimizing vital statistics and numbers**. One of the tactics employed was spreading news of huge numbers of Muslim women raped by Serbs, although they could not be vetted following the investigations carried out by UN representatives: *The UN Population Fund*, which drafted a report on the subject of sexual violence in Kosovo, based on interviews with Albanian refugees, does not mention the exact number of interviewed women and made implausible accusations, not supported by any proof (such as stabbing pregnant women in the stomach and skewering the foetuses). Ron Redmond, the then-spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, was also accused by journalists of making statements describing acts of extraordinary cruelty, for which he offered no proof.²⁸

²⁵ Philip Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 378.

²⁷ Frank Füredi, *The New Ideology of Imperialism. Renewing the Moral Imperative*, London, Pluto Press, 1994, p. 110.

²⁸ Philip Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

The **mystification of ethnic conflict** is another similarity between the two types of propaganda. In this case, it manifests itself by romanticizing and placing the discourse on the causes of conflict in a simplistic paradigm of ethnic tensions, externalized by outbreaks of hatred predicated on unsophisticated and primitive tribal lines, proof of their backwards nature in need of a Western re-education process²⁹ - a mark of imperialist thought.

All instruments of manipulation described above would not have had the same level of efficiency in the absence of the **complicity of the press** – what BBC correspondent Martin Bell labelled “journalism of attachment”, in order to single out a new style of news reporting, more involved and biased, shedding its former tone of neutrality “in the battle between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor”. Many journalists adopted this subjective style to report on the events in Kosovo and to minimize the negative consequences of the NATO intervention. An eloquent example is the different ways of reporting the same news story of 30th May 1999 by *Reuters* and *The Guardian*. The incident referred to the destruction of a crowded bridge in Vavarin, leaving 9 dead and 17 wounded; however, the titles are drastically in contrast: “NATO bombing Wrecks Carnage on Serbian Town Bridge” (*Reuters*) vs “Planes buzzed overhead and then death came” (*The Guardian*).³⁰ We can note the changing of the predicate from the active to the passive voice in the title in *The Guardian*, in order to obscure the subject and dilute the responsibility for the damages and victims. This

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 379 - 380.

³⁰ Julijana Mojsilovic, Stephen Bates, “Planes buzzed overhead – and then death came”, in: *The Guardian*, 31st May 1999, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/may/31/balkans>, accessed on 19th September 2017.

subjective attitude could be considered a counter-reaction to the prolonged conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and to the war in Bosnia, where the involvement of the international community was unsatisfactory and the measures taken were found wanting.³¹

Efficiency

The 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO forces remains a controversial episode. Marjorie Cohn argues in her article “NATO bombing of Kosovo: Humanitarian Intervention or Crime Against Humanity?” that the bombings constituted the perfect opportunity for the United States to consolidate their military hegemony in the Balkans and control the oil flux from the Caspian Sea,³² by redirecting it through the territory of Turkey, not through Russia or the former Soviet republics (the bombing of the Novi Sad bridges, for instance, alongside other strategic points on the Danube, halted international transport and, implicitly, the transit of Caspian oil from the Black Sea on the route favoured by Russia. For Cohn, the humanitarian justification of the intervention was merely a pretext dismantled by the fact that the bombardment left between 500 – 1800 dead and numerous other victims and destruction in its wake, comprising the public infrastructure of Yugoslavia, not just military objectives: bridges, highways, railroads,

³¹ Philip Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

³² Marjorie Cohn, “NATO bombing of Kosovo: Humanitarian Intervention or Crime Against Humanity?”, in: *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, Vol. 15, 2002, p. 87.

factories, construction equipment, media centres, hospitals, schools, apartment buildings, houses, buses, forests etc.³³

Moreover, apart from terrorizing the entire population, they lead to increasing violence in Kosovo and generated a significant flux of refugees.³⁴ There is data which suggests that the bombings caused more victims than were recorded in the three months prior to the intervention, period which was supposed to be designated as a “humanitarian catastrophe”.³⁵

In the author’s view, the United States’ objective of ensuring hegemony on the international stage, especially relative to Russia, was secured by maintaining military bases in the Balkans, controlling resources and the labour market in Eastern Europe, which can materialize in the form of investment opportunities and export markets for Western companies.³⁶ The arguments are supported by statements made by officials such as the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Wesley Clark (“[the operation] was not designed as a means of blocking Serb ethnic cleansing. It was not designed as a means of waging war against the Serb and MUP [internal police] forces in Kosovo. Not in any way. There was never any intent to do that. That was not the idea”)³⁷ or the US Energy Secretary Bill Richardson (“This is about America’s energy security. It’s also about preventing strategic

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 82 - 83.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

³⁶ Marjorie Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

³⁷ Noam Chomsky, “A Review of NATO’s War over Kosovo”, in: *Z Magazine*, April-May, 2001, available at https://chomsky.info/200005___/, accessed on 19th September 2017.

inroads by those who don't share our values. We're trying to move these newly independent countries towards the west").³⁸

Another aspect which did not elude the international community was the questionable legality of the intervention, which took place without the consent of the United Nations Security Council, the only international body with the authority to sanction measures requiring the use of force, as per article 42 of the UN Charter.³⁹ Furthermore, article 2, paragraph 4 imposes upon its Member States the resolution of conflict by peaceful means and forbids the use of force or the threat of force,⁴⁰ while paragraph 7 upholds the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of a state, lacking authorization from the Security Council.⁴¹ It can be also argued that the intervention in Yugoslavia violates principle VI of the Nürnberg Tribunal, which expressly forbids the "planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances"⁴² and describes as war crimes (among others) as "wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity"⁴³ and crimes against humanity as "inhuman acts done against any civilian population".⁴⁴

³⁸ George Monbiot, "A discreet deal in the pipeline", in: *The Guardian*, 15th February 2001, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2001/feb/15/oil.georgemonbiot>, accessed on 19th September 2017.

³⁹ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, San Francisco, 24 October 1945, chapter VII, art. 42.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, chapter I, art. 2, paragraph 4.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, paragraph 7.

⁴² United Nations, International Law Commission, *Text of the Nürnberg Principles Adopted by the International Law Commission*, Yearbook of the International Law Commission, Vol. II, 1950, principle VI, paragraph a(i), p. 376.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, principle VI, paragraph b, p. 377.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, paragraph c, p. 377.

Consequently, through the military operations carried out in Yugoslavia, NATO triggered a war of aggression, attacking the civilian population and destroying the infrastructure of the state by using cluster bombs in populated areas, bombing during daytime, attacking mobile targets without first ensuring that they were military objectives and bombing areas with no military purpose, such as the radio and television station in Belgrade.⁴⁵ These actions also violate the Fourth Geneva Convention (relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War), which specifies that military operations during war cannot be directed towards the civilian population and civilian objectives.⁴⁶

Even though President Slobodan Milošević and other Serbian officials have been accused of war crimes at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, no equivalent charges have been pressed against NATO leaders responsible for carrying out the bombing on the territory of Yugoslavia,⁴⁷ proof that pro-intervention propaganda must have been at least partly efficient. In recent years, the emergence of the concept of *responsibility to protect*, outlined at the 2005 United Nations World Summit by Secretary General Kofi Annan in two reports entitled “A More Secured World: Our Shared Responsibility”⁴⁸ and “In Larger Freedom: Towards

⁴⁵ Marjorie Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁴⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross, *Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention)*, Geneva, 12 August 1949.

⁴⁷ Marjorie Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁴⁸ United Nations, *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility*, Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations Department of Public Information, 2004.

Development, Security and Human Rights for All”,⁴⁹ has allowed for a more permissive view on what previously constituted territorial inviolability and non-intervention in domestic affairs. As such, it falls within under the responsibility of each individual state to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, otherwise the international community will take it upon itself to act towards the fulfilment of these objectives, whenever necessary. This ideological development could constitute an argument in favour of the intervention in Yugoslavia, seeing as the Yugoslav state failed to protect its own citizens from ethnic cleansing. It is certainly a line of reasoning employed even today, for example in pieces arguing that the behaviour of the Syrian state towards its citizens (such as the use of chemical weapons)⁵⁰ is valid grounds for an international intervention.⁵¹

Conclusions

In his article, “Humanitarian Intervention and Pretexts for War”, Ryan Goodman identifies a so-called model of pretext-wars (according to

⁴⁹ United Nations General Assembly, *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all. Report of the Secretary-General*, 21 March 2005.

⁵⁰ Stephanie Nebehay, “Syrian government forces used chemical weapons more than two dozen times: U.N.”, *Reuters*, 6th September 2017, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-putin/putin-in-syria-says-mission-accomplished-orders-partial-russian-pull-out-idUSKBN1E50X1>, accessed on 19th September 2017.

⁵¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, “How the World Could – and Maybe Should – Intervene in Syria”, *The Atlantic*, 23rd January 2012, available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/01/how-the-world-could-and-maybe-should-intervene-in-syria/251776/>, accessed on 19th September 2017.

which revisionist states would start or involve themselves more easily in conflicts, seeing as a permissible legal regime would reduce the costs of said conflict)⁵² and dismantles it empirically by referencing case studies conducted using the database *Correlates of War*. This database identifies three types of issues which can lead to violent conflict: (1) territorial claims; (2) foreign policy behaviour; (3) regime / government changes. Humanitarian interventions would fall under the third type of issue, with the least possibility of degenerating in armed conflict. In comparison, territorial points of contention prove to be the most volatile.⁵³

His argument is centred around the hypothesis that encouraging revisionist states to justify the use of force as a humanitarian exercise can, in fact, facilitate conditions favourable to peace⁵⁴ and he discusses the concept of “blowback”, describing a situation in which the public construction of pro-war justification limits the actions of decision-makers in later stages (i.e. portraying the enemy as a threat to international security in the early stages of triggering a war could later prevent decision-makers from adopting a more conciliatory approach).⁵⁵ Similarly, propaganda in favour of humanitarian interventions can transform the discourse on war and facilitate the process of conflict resolution by expanding the variety of negotiation options and possible compromises, even if they are only done in order to save face;⁵⁶ for

⁵² Ryan Goodman, “Humanitarian Intervention and Pretexts for War”, in: *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 100, No. 1, January 2006, p. 114.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 119 - 120.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 123 - 124.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 129.

instance, renouncing territorial claims in exchange for concessions on the rights of ethnic minorities.

In the case of Kosovo, the author argues that humanitarian justification for the use of force allowed NATO leaders to make difficult political concessions and de-escalate the conflict without resorting to ground forces, by introducing this new variable as a point of debate.⁵⁷ According to this line of reasoning, propaganda in favour of humanitarian interventions would encourage the resolution of conflicts rather than serve as a pretext for starting a war. In addition, there are voices highlighting that, as a result of the bombings, the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians came to an end, as did Slobodan Milošević's government. On the other hand, critics of the intervention point out the scope of destruction, the number of civilian casualties and the unnecessary suffering caused by the bombings,⁵⁸ alongside the operation's faulty legitimacy.

To conclude, I would argue recalibrating the perspective on the issue under discussion. Without a doubt, propaganda in favour of humanitarian interventions can share certain features with war propaganda, but it would only qualify as such if the operation in question were to be classified as a war of aggression. If we were to label the bombing of Yugoslavia in such a manner, keeping in mind that the strategic bombing of civilians is considered a war crime⁵⁹, then pro-intervention propaganda also becomes war

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 130.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, *The Crisis in Kosovo*, 2000, available at <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/nato/Natbm200-01.htm>, accessed on 19th September 2017.

⁵⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross, *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*, Geneva, 8th of June 1977, art. 35, art. 51, paragraphs 4-5, art. 52, paragraphs 2.

propaganda. Supporters of the intervention will, however, never accept this taxonomy, due to their fundamental ideological divergence with respect to what constitutes “aggression”.

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